

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2018

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are writing to express our profound concerns regarding Iran's continued presence in Syria, including the recent Iranian incursion into Israeli territory, and to strongly encourage you to add Israel to your current Middle East tour to reassure our ally and signal to the world that the United States stands with Israel. We are concerned that without United States leadership, Iran will continue to exploit its increasingly permanent presence in Syria and along Israel's border.

Last year Members of Congress urged you to present Congress with a strategy to address the Syrian conflict that also included how to prevent Iran from gaining a permanent foothold in Syria. While we appreciate the Department of State making clear the Administration shares our concerns regarding Iran's presence and damaging activities in Syria, we have yet to see a strategy that will ensure Iran does not have a permanent presence on Israel's border.

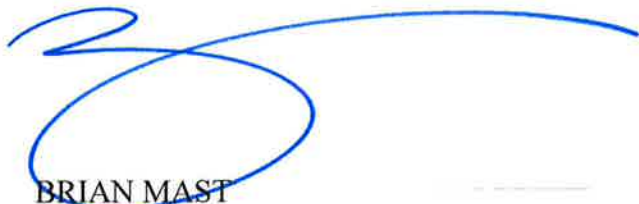
Time is of the essence, given that on February 10, 2018, an Iranian drone originating from Syria violated Israeli airspace and was shot down by the Israel Air Force. Israeli aircraft destroyed the Iranian drone's command and control center in Syria and upon their return to Israel encountered fire from Syrian anti-aircraft systems, leading to the downing of one F-16 aircraft. In response to this incident, Israel launched additional aircraft to target specific military sites in Syria.

Iran's malign activities in the region and across the globe must not be condoned in any form or fashion. We need a strategy in Syria that will both push back on Iran's presence in Syria and assure our ally, Israel, that the United States remains fully steadfast when it is under threat. The Administration must take swift action to address this grave situation and make clear its support for Israel's right to defend itself.

We renew our call for you to present Congress with a strategy to prevent Iran's permanent presence in Syria and to amend your current schedule and visit Israel during your current Middle East tour. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,


BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER
Member of Congress


BRIAN MAST
Member of Congress